

REMINISCENCES OF L. M. GOTTSCHALK.

BY BERTHA HARWOOD.

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I wonder how many know that there are two versions of Gottschalk's "Last Hope" ? The original was composed during his visit to Santiago de Cuba in 1853, inspired by a touching episode while on his journey to that place. It was published by Firth, Pond & Co., in 1854.

William L. Hawes, of New Orleans, who is a great lover of Gottschalk and has almost a complete collection of his works, as well as the bust herein pictured, has hunted in vain to procure a copy of the original "Last Hope." One copy is in possession of a lady in Mobile, but she refuses to give it up at the price offered; the other (original MS.) is in the archives at Washington.

It is said that the first did not differ from the second as to theme, but that the latter, instead of the rapid upward short chromatic scale and descending arpeggios, had quick upward chromatic sequences, similar to those which abound in Gottschalk's "Ricordati," "God Save the Queen," etc., followed by descending arpeggios. The introduction and ending was also unlike the present edition.



BUST OF L. M. GOTTSCHALK.

Presented to Wm. L. Hawes by Clara Gottschalk Peterson, sister of L. M. Gottschalk.

The next edition appeared in February, 1855, and the revised version of the "Last Hope" was published by the house of William Hall & Co., in 1856, which at that time owned all of Gottschalk's copyrights. It was then, about 1856 or '57, that Gottschalk made his second trip to Cuba, and on his return to the United States he played in his concerts the revised version, which had sprung into favor during his absence. The plates of the original composition had then been destroyed.

When the revised edition was negotiated for by William Hall & Co., Gottschalk wrote to Mr. Hall the following letter: "Willingly ; it does not sell at all; pay me the fifty dollars which it has cost me and it is yours." Some years later Gottschalk wrote: "But my ill will toward those publishers who, when I stood in most need of them, continued only to discourage me increased with my success. Returned today to New York after an absence of six years and in a position which I have conquered inch by inch. I revenged myself by refusing all those who approached me to offer \$500 and even \$1,000 for one piece only. One publisher, the one who had first purchased the "Last Hope" (a gentleman, I must say, toward whom I have no grudge), offered me \$1,000 for my *Murmures Eoliens*.' This sum made me smile on comparing it with the \$30, at which price I had offered in vain my pieces some years before. It then was gratifying to me to give a proof of my gratitude to General Hall, with whom my contract had expired. I sent to him '*Murmures Eoliens*,' '*Pastorella et Cavaliere*,' '*Ojos Criollos*' and many other pieces, asking him to fix the conditions of a new contract, which I was ready to sign." This should be an inspiration to some of our struggling composers of today, whose best efforts now remain securely locked in their desks.

The meteoric success of Gottschalk as a pianist would probably have been rivaled by his compositions had he lived. It is hardly just to judge his capabilities as a composer by what he has left, because his time and energy were so largely spent in the pianistic field.

Mr. Hawes, of New Orleans, has in his possession many interesting things pertaining to the career of Gottschalk. One is a program of his farewell concert in 1841 and the announcement of its postponement. As it shows something of the early life of New Orleans as well as that of Gottschalk, I will reproduce it just as it was printed:

CONCERT POSTPONED.

FAREWELL CONCERT

For the benefit of

MASTER MOREAU GOTTSCHALK,

Eleven years old, a pupil of Mr. Letellier, of this city, prior to his leaving for France, to perfect himself under the great master,

FRIDAY, THE 23D APRIL, 1841.

AT THE ST. LOUIS BALL ROOM.

MASTER MOREAU GOTTSCHALK will have the honor, aided by the artists of this city, who have kindly volunteered their services, to offer to the public a

GRAND VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT.

PROGRAMME.

First Part.

Overture—Grand Orchestra—Opera the "Domino Noir" of Auber, by the artists of the Orleans Theatre.

Brilliant Variations for the Piano, on the Cavatine of "Anna Bolena" of Donizetti, by L. Farrene—executed by Master Moreau Gottschalk.

Air, with accompaniment of Grand Orchestra, sung by Miss C. D., a pupil of Mr. Letellier.

Air, with Variations for the Hautbois, with accompaniment of Grand Orchestra, executed by Fourmestreaux, artist of the Orleans Theatre.

"Le Moine," by Meyerbeer, sung by Mr. Bernardet, artist of the Orleans Theatre, accompanied on the piano by Master Moreau Gottschalk.

Solo for Cornet à Piston—Reminiscences of "Robin des Bois" of Weber—with grand orchestral accompaniments, arranged and executed by Mr. Lehman, artist of the Orleans Theatre.

Brilliant Duett, on an original theme, for Piano and Violin, by Osborne and De Beriot, executed by Mr. Micolan. Artist of the Orleans Theatre, and Master Moreau Gottschalk.

Second Part.

Overture—Grand Orchestra—opera "La Muette" of Auber, executed by the artists of the Orleans Theatre.

"L'Ange déchû," melody by Vogel, sung by Mr. Bernardet, artist of the Orleans Theatre, accompanied on the Piano by Master Moreau Gottschalk.

Concerto for the Violin, by Kreutzer, L. F., with grand orchestral accompaniment, executed by Mr. Micolan, artist of the Orleans Theatre.

"La Serenata," duett by Rossini, sung by Mlle. Calvé and Mr. Nourrit, artist of the Orleans Theatre.

Solo for the Trombone, Aria "Tu vedui la Svertureta," from the opera "Il Pirata" of Bellina, with grand orchestral accompaniments, executed by Signor Cioffi, artist of the St. Charles Theatre.

Brilliant Variations for the Piano, on favorite choeur in "Il Crociato" of Meyerbeer, by Henry Herz, executed by Master Moreau Gottschalk.

The Concert will begin at 7 o'clock precisely.

Price of Tickets, \$1.50.

Tickets can be had at all the bookstores, and on the evening of the Concert at the box office.

Following closely upon his first triumph in his native city, the New Orleans Courier of May 17, 1845, chronicled Gottschalk's first Parisian success thus: On April 2, about 1,200 persons assembled in the rooms of Pleyel, at Paris. They belonged chiefly to the upper ranks of society, and awaited with impatience the appearance of a youth who has just commenced the thorny career of music. A studious youth always and everywhere finds sympathy. Young Moreau Gottschalk was at length introduced by Messrs. Chopin, Hallé, Thalberg, Zimmerman, Berlioz, Halévy, Caraffa, Osborne, Habeneck and Auber—all men of the highest eminence in the musical science.

"Gerald, Franchomme, Marras and Mlle. Bernon were anxious to aid in the triumph of the young musician. All the elements, all the means of complete success were united in the concert of which we are speaking. Young Gottschalk executed a fantasy on Semiramide,' another on 'Robert le Diable,' and a concerto of Chopin, who, delighted with a performance so ample and so perfect, affectionately seized the hands of Gottschalk, drew him to his bosom, and said: 'I thank you, my child, for having interpreted my work in this manner.' The young victor comprehended the value of such a compliment. The applause that has attended his efforts are the omens of a glorious future. In truth, it is the voice of masters in the science — the homage of a select society — that have hailed the debut of young Gottschalk. This interesting young artist had put the name of his country at the head of the program. A Creole, he desired that New Orleans should partake of his first success. If he remembers us, we have not forgotten the studious child who so happily profited by the lessons of his first master, Mr. Letellier, and we look forward with pride and hope to the future success of this young and interesting child of Louisiana."

Gottschalk was loyal to his own country, and when, after his return to New Orleans in 1853, he was called to the front by the deafening, applause, he said that the piece he had just played, "National Airs." was intended as a "profession de foi," to make use of his own expression, a profession of attachment, as it were, in evidence of the pride and satisfaction he felt in being once more at home. He said in substance: "Whatever of reputation, whatever of success, whatever of renown I have achieved elsewhere, I have never forgotten, nor could I ever forget, that I am an American from the bottom of my heart. My feelings on this occasion are too deep for utterance. I am profoundly and joyfully affected by the warm reception I have met in my native city, and, if it has been my good fortune to acquire any celebrity abroad, the reflection that I have contributed in however slight a degree to American art, American genius and American superiority has been my greatest reward!" This speech created a tremendous sensation, and the young artist withdrew from the stage amidst a perfect shower of bouquets.

He was not only true to his country, but to his native city also, and he has preserved the negro songs of "Congo Square." besides many Creole songs.

Having met several persons who heard him, and receiving from them all the same enthusiastic poems on his marvelous playing. I am willing to believe what was said of Gottschalk in a New Orleans paper in the year 1853. It was at a rehearsal before a few friends, prior to his extended concert tour, and the paper says in part: "We find it difficult, even after the lapse of twenty-four hours, to express our ideas of the transcendent genius of Gottschalk without employing language that might be deemed overwrought and extravagant. He is so incomparably superior to all whom we have heard, he soars so **far** above those whose skill and genius we have thought unsurpassable, that we scarcely know in what terms to convey our ideas of his matchless excellence. To say that the mechanism of his execution is a marvel (though in this, the least quality of the truly great artist, he is unapproachable), is yet very far from expressing accurately the peculiar perfection of his instrumentation. In this respect Gottschalk is to the piano what Paganini was to the violin. Like Paganini, he first exhausted all the resources of the instrument within the reach of others, and then applied his genius successfully to the discovery of new movements, illustrating further and richer harmonies, unique, unthought of and unknown.

Gottschalk runs his nimble fingers over the keys in a mere prelude, and the first bar creates in the mind of the listener a marked sensation of power, grandeur and genius. He commences a morceau, and holds his audience spellbound and entranced. His touch is so firm, vigorous, springy and elastic; his fingering so bewilderingly rapid, yet faultlessly true and modulated; his magnificent harmonic groupings, set off, as it were, and throw into relief the exquisite litheness, grace and elegance of the treble; his electric transitions, originality and breadth of style, richness of accompaniment, consummate ease and finish, the whole restrained by a pure and innate taste just within the severe compass of art, and thus completely satisfying, without ever displeasing, the most fastidious and critical ear all these things constitute an aggregation of musical merits that we can only characterize as being stupendous. Let it not be imagined that Gottschalk is only a wonderful pianist—that he simply unites the thundering energy of De Meyer with the neatness and precision of Strakosch.

It is true that he excels both these eminent artists in their own peculiar line, while his execution develops a thousand beauties which others have vainly sought to evoke from the piano. Beneath his flexible fingers the piano loses its distinctive character, and attains the solemn grandeur of the organ, or the softness and plaintive sweetness of a distant horn, or the spirit stirring tones of the clarion, or the mingled and delicious harmony of a complete orchestra, or,

most marvelous of all, the sympathetic and irresistible fascination of the human voice, and, throughout all the mazes of his glorious execution, while beating the bass with overpowering strength, and eliciting from the treble keys the most delicate and delicious modulations, there is a certain peculiarity of style, a characteristic originality which belongs to him alone, and isolates him from all other performers." Such, in part was chronicled of Gottschalk in his own time and in his home city. Who, then, can say that "man is without honor save in his own country"?

The honors bestowed upon this American genius have remained unparalleled in this country.

Though he died in a foreign country, Gottschalk's countrymen here had an opportunity to do him honor when his remains arrived in New York. At the service, on October 3, 1870, they chose largely the music from his own compositions. After Cherubini's "Requiem Mass" was sung, the lamented artist's "Last Hope," "Solitude," "Pensée Poétique" and "Morte"—the piece he was playing at the time of his death at Rio Janeiro—were heard in reverential interpretation.

Since the time of Gottschalk, music has undergone many changes in style, but I believe that some of his works will live. Certain it is that his meteoric career as a pianist will always be remembered as long as there is any one left who heard him, or who reads what is written by those who did. New Orleans is proud to claim him as her own Gottschalk.



FACSIMILE OF ORIGINAL MS. OF « LAST HOPE »